

State Interagency Coordinating Council

Testimony in Support of

S.B. 2 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SAFETY, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL EQUITY
OF CHILDREN IN RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

March 9, 2021

Committee on Children

Dear Senator Anwar, Representative Linehan and respected members of the
Children's Committee

My name is Cindy Jackson, and I am a Birth to Three provider and Chair of the Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC). Thank-you for all your efforts on behalf of children and families in the State of Connecticut and especially your ongoing support of Birth to Three (B23) services to our most vulnerable children. I am grateful for the opportunity to share the State Interagency Coordinating Councils' strong support for **Section 15 of SB2** An Act Concerning Social Equity And The Health, Safety And Education Of Children which aims to expand B23 services and eliminate parent fees for such services.

Birth to Five Expansion

We fully appreciate the intent of implementing a plan to expand B23 services to age 5 but we are aware that full implementation of a Birth to Five system will have significant fiscal implications. However, expansion of B23 services to only children with summer birthdays between May and August may be a more reasonable expansion with less fiscal impact. It is also an opportunity to develop a collaborative system with the LEAs on a smaller scale.

This system change is supported by a report generated by the Preschool Education Workgroup (established under P.A. 19-184) in 2019. This report described positive policy and practice considerations when allowing families who have children turning three in the months from May to August to have the option of remaining in their current Birth to Three programs until the start of the following school year. This would provide uninterrupted services for the child and family. For children who are eligible for early childhood special education, this would allow for one transition into the school program at the beginning of the school year. For children who are not eligible for early childhood special education, this would provide some continuity of services throughout the summer, when more options for early childhood programs within or outside of the district may be available at the start of the new school

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year. The goal would be to eliminate multiple unnecessary transitions over such a short period and provide continuity of services for all children.

In the spring of 2020 after the pandemic began, children were unable to transition to their local educational agency because the schools were closed. The Office of Early Childhood in collaboration with Department of Education supported continuing B23 services through the summer of 2020. With the continuation of B23 supports and services, families felt their children continued to develop skills and continued to increase their competence and confidence in helping their children to learn and develop. Parents described positive transition experiences during a difficult time. The B23 programs and the respective school systems worked closely to make sure that evaluations and PPTs occurred in a timely manner once the schools began to open so that the children could start pre-school in September of 2020. School closing due to the pandemic were unfortunate, but it gave us an opportunity to support children and families with “summer birthdays “. We now know supporting children and families through the summer until school begins was beneficial in reducing transitions and could continue to work in the future. Please support the expansion of B23 services for children with summer birthdays

Elimination of Parent Participation Fees

In March 2020, The Governor through executive order, eliminated parent fees for B23. Due to the pandemic, B23 services were being provided remotely, families were not referring their children to B23 and Office of Early Childhood did not want families to have to drop out of B23 at a critical time in their child’s development. During this year, many families voiced how grateful they were not to have to pay this fee as jobs were lost and/or changed and caregivers had many other financial concerns. These fees are a particular financial burden to middle class working families. We know historically that many of those children that need early intervention and do not receive it, show up in kindergarten with academic, language and social- emotional issues that could have been resolved in the early years of life. Increased insurance revenue during 2020 based on changes in coding and enhanced insurance billing served as a significant revenue source in lieu of parent fees. It is expected that commercial insurance will continue to be a source of revenue for B23.

It is hoped that the Committee on Children will support continuing B23 services for “summer birthdays” and eliminating parent fees. Thank-you.

Sincerely,

Cindy Jackson, Chair

Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council